يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O ye who believe! Siam are prescribed to you, as they were prescribed to those before you, so that you become Mutaqi

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOUM

By Dr. Qamar Zaman



English Translation By:
Zubair Hussain

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SILSILA DAWAT E QURANI

P.O. BOX NO: 11037, DHA, LAHORE

Phone: +92 331 4851184

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THE TRUTH ABOUT SOUM

INTRODUCTION

All world religions are based on some common traditions (customs) and faiths. First, there is always some type of worship, which is considered the central pillar of each religion. Second, there is a tradition in which human is seen torturing himself. He goes hungry or hurts himself physically to please his God. Third is the Pilgrimage or the tradition of visiting holy persons or places. This includes visiting the graves of saints or buildings associated with either God or His saints. Last, every religion includes a concept of charity or spending wealth in the way of God.

In addition, some faiths are considered an essential part of the religion. God is the most important part of faith. Every religion has a concept of God whether it is Monotheistic or Polytheistic. Then, there are faiths associated with God, which the believers must accept and demonstrate.

The concept of a prophet is also an integral part of every religion. The prophets or messengers are considered the most favored among all the creations of God. Their characteristics and abilities are so exaggerated that they do not even remotely resemble human beings. Their noble character is used only for praise, as it is impossible for any human being to follow and be like them. The fact is that the prophets reach the apex of moral character by living according to God's Commands. However, we are required to believe in every exaggeration associated with the Messenger no

matter it results in the death of our common sense. Otherwise, we are labeled blasphemers and thrown out of religion.

The relatives and friends of the Messenger even surpass him in their supernatural characteristics and powers. We are mesmerized and accept every tradition associated with these manmade deities. We dare not think or question anything or else we face the wrath of the so-called guardians of the religion. Even those claiming to be relatives of the sacred personalities, who lived centuries ago, instantly achieve the status of being pious and holy. In brief religion is a dark labyrinth of traditions and faiths. We dare not question any tradition or belief or else we invite death by Fatwa (**فتویٰ**).

Today's Islam is no different than any other religion. It includes the same faiths and traditions proclaimed by other religions though with different names. It too prohibits and suppresses any rational thinking and inquiry.

I do not consider it my right to criticize other religions. First of all we need to take a critical look at our own religion. Do not we own the same questionable faiths, traditions, and customs practiced by other religions albeit with different names? Let us take a critical look at our own faiths, traditions, and customs in the light of the Quran.

Dear friends, if you are not familiar with my previous books, I want to let you know that I take guidance and understand Islam only and only from the Quran. In my view Islam is not a religion, which has been made a prisoner of a set of faiths and rituals of worship. I consider it a code of conduct for all living people of the earth (earthlings). Hence, I try to understand this code of conduct only from the Quran. I agree with those authentic scholars of Islam who believe that there are so many false and irrational traditions

attributed to the Prophet. Would not it be an insult to attribute such invalid and irrational traditions to our beloved Prophet? If so, how can we use something that is not even valid to understand Quran?

Keep in mind that after narrating these illogical traditions the narrators never miss to add this disclaimer “Or whatever the Prophet might have said.” After attributing a false statement to the Prophet, these narrators try to free themselves from any liability by adding that if Prophet did not say that, then whatever he said. This is an absurd statement and an insult to our common sense. It is not mere dishonesty but a crime to fabricate narrations or invent traditions and attribute them to the Prophet to advance own religious or political schemes.

Hence, whatever we got in the name of Hadith **(حديث)** is not at all necessary to understand the Deen “دين” (total submission to God or living life according to God’s laws or decrees). Actually, it is very harmful to Deen. Can any sensible person deny the fact that endless injections of Hadith and Fiqh have completely disfigured our Deen? If you want to understand Deen, please study the Quran. After reading and understanding the message of the Quran you will be surprised to learn that God’s Commandments (and his Parameters, Values or Morals) stay the same from the beginning to the end of times. By following God’s Commandments we can achieve success, i.e. peace and prosperity, today same like the Prophet and his companions did centuries ago.

God’s Commandments (and Parameters, Values or Morals) have not changed and will never change. Any change in circumstances does not affect the Commandments given to us by our Creator. Also, we never fail if we follow these Commandments. Further,

these Commandments are not bound by time or space. They are workable in all times and spaces. Hence, God’s Commands are Supreme and Final whether the time is past, present, or future. The times and spaces can change but God’s Commandments and His Parameters, Values or Morals do not.

Now let us study the subject of Soum **(صوم)** in the light of the teachings of the Quran. We will study and discuss those verses where Soum is mentioned.

THE TRUTH ABOUT FASTING

The root of the Arabic word Soum (صوم) is made of the letters saad, waaw, and meem **(ص و م)**. Soum **صوم** basically means to stop, cease, or discontinue. Here are some examples.

Sam Alfaras صام الفرس Horse stopped feeding when used for horse,

Sam Alma صام المآء Water stopped flowing when used for water,

Sam Alrih صام الريح Wind stopped blowing when used for air, and

Sam An Alta'am صام عن الطعام Man stopped eating (when used for food).

Like Nation (قوم) the paradigm of Soum **(صوم)** is action (**فعْلٌ**) and its root letters are saad, waaw, and meem **(ص و م)**. Sam, Yasoum, Souma, and Siama (**صام ، يصوم ، صوماً ، صياماً**) are derived from this root word and they mean to stop whatever someone is doing. On page 953 the Arabic dictionary "**القاموس الوحيد**" defines the meaning of Al-Soum **(الصوم)** as to stop speech or action. But in religion Islam Soum **(صوم)** is assumed to mean stop eating, drinking, and intimate relations with wife.

Siam **(صيام)** is mentioned in the verses 183-188 of Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقرة)** and Fasting (روزه) is often derived from these verses. Let us study these verses directly from the Quran. God Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ O أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ

مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ
خَيْرٌ لَّهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ O

O ye who believe! Fasting (**روزہ**) *is prescribed to you, as it was prescribed to those before you, so that you become Muttaqi* (**متقی**)*. These are just a number of days. If any of you is sick or on a journey, he can make up the number on other days. For those who have the power to fast (but choose not to do so) there is a ransom, the feeding of a needy. But whoever does well of his own will, it is better for him. And fasting is better for you if you knew. (Traditional Translation)*

Let us assume that Soum (**صوم**) means Fasting (**روزہ**). Then, five out of six times Quran uses it as a punishment. But the beginning of the above verses is stunning. Here Quran states that the reason Fasting has been prescribed because it will make you Muttaqi (**متقی**). Is not it strange that the same act used as a punishment five times is now being prescribed as a gift or blessing? How is it possible that the same physical trial used as a punishment on several occasions suddenly turns into a blessing that helps people become Muttaqi (righteous)? If we consider it a punishment here as well, how come God subjected the whole Muslim Nation (**امت**) to this punishment from the day one? Does Muslim Nation deserve this kind of punishment or is Siam (**صیام**) something other than keeping oneself hungry and thirsty?

If we look at the sad and sorry plight of Muslims as a result of their never ending infighting and quarrels, they sure deserve such type of punishment even longer than one month Fasting. Doubtless, the condition of Muslims today warrants the prescription of Ramadhan Fasting as punishment. But can Fasting in Ramadhan make the Muslims Muttaqi (**متقی**)? This is a million dollar question. As a matter

of fact, in no period in history Muslims ever became Muttaqi through Fasting during Ramadhan. In reality, Muslims display utter lack of discipline during Ramadhan. You can see complete chaos and disorder on the streets, which results in complete breakdown of traffic system. Groceries and produce disappear from the shelves in stores. Prices of essential commodities sky rocket. Ramadhan is sure a blessing for the hoarders and profiteers, but not for the common folks. Workers are either lazy and ignore their duties or absent during office hours. Do we need any more evidence to show that Fasting **(روزہ)** has not made any person Muttaqi and can never do so? Instead of making people Muttaqi, Fasting **(روزہ)** in fact does the opposite.

Now let us take a look at the verse 177 of Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقرة)**, which defines the characteristics or qualities of a Muttaqi (righteous).

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَالْمَلائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى
وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلاةَ
وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ
وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

It is not a virtue that you turn your faces towards east or west. Virtuous is the one who is in peace & harmony with God's commandments, the Last Day, the Angels, the Scripture, and the Prophets; and who spends his wealth on relative, orphans, helpless, wayfarer, needy, and broke; and strives to establish political, social, and economic system according to God's Commandments to bring about prosperity to the whole society; and he keeps his promises; And he is stead fast in all circumstance

> *whether he encounters daily hardships or full scale war; such are the truthful people and deserve to be called Muttaqi* **(متقی)**.

Please ponder over the last part of this verse. It clearly states that only those people who possess the qualities or characteristics mentioned in this verse deserve to be called Muttaqi. Keeping in mind the characteristics of Taqwa تقویٰ (Righteousness), you can figure out who is a Muttaqi. Can fasting, which brings nothing but hunger and thirst; produce such noble characteristics in a person?

Please note these important points made in the above verse regarding a Muttaqi.

He becomes a Momin مومن (peace provider) by conforming to God's decrees, Last Day, Angels, the Scripture, and the Prophets.

He spends his wealth on relatives, orphans, helpless; those committed to God's cause, the needy, and broke.

He establishes the system of Salat **(صلوٰة)** and Zakat **(زکوٰة)** according to God's decrees.

He brings prosperity to humanity.

He fulfills his promises.

He is stead fast in all circumstances be it a routine hardship or state of war.

Did fasting, which is nothing but mere hunger and thirst, ever produce such noble qualities in a Muslim or any human being? The answer is no, never.

To produce these characteristics we need an ideology based on the firm Commandments whose results can be guaranteed. The same Commandments that Prophets enforced with the help of Angels and brought peace and security to the society. Every aspect of this ideology guarantees prosperity to the whole society. And those who follow this ideology are always prepared to take care of the needy and helpless in the society. They spend their wealth on those in need. They check and control economic woes with the system of Zakat **(زکوٰة)**. They always speak the truth and keep their promises. They uphold the scale of justice. They are steadfast in all circumstances. What produces these noble characteristics in a human being? It is Soum **(صوم)**, of course. Those who acquire these qualities deserve to be called Muttaqi **(متقی)**.

God Almighty says:

أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ

These are just a number of days. If any of you is sick or on a journey, he can make up the number on other days. For those who have the power to fast (and do not fast) they feed the needy. (Traditional translation)

Here every translator plays mind games with God's words. Some claim there is an invisible “Not” **(لا)** before “Yutiqunah" (یطیقونہ). Hence, they insert (NOT) in their translation. Obviously, this translation is done for the Fasting **(روزہ)** of hunger and thirst. If someone has the power or ability to fast but chooses not to do so, the whole business of Fasting **(روزہ)** falls flat on its head. Hence, they force “Not” in the translation. “Whoever has (no) power to fast, can feed the helpless, as a ransom.” Is not this a modification in the

Quran? We blame others (Jews and Christians) for changing the scripture. Are not we guilty of doing exactly the same? Others were not satisfied with this alteration and they came up with their own. They claim "Yutiqunah" **(يطيقونہ)** means people who fast with too much force. Hence, God exempted them from fasting and instead let them feed the helpless. Obviously, this unique modification too is done to support the Fasting **(روزہ)** of hunger and thirst.

فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

But whoever does good gladly, it is good for him. And fasting is better for you if you knew. (Traditional translation)

Here Arabic word Tatawwa'a (تطوع) means obedience. Hence, correct translation would be "Whoever obeys the good, it is good for him." There is no mention of doing good gladly in the original Arabic text. In the verse 185 God says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنَ الْهُدَى
وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ
مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ
وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Ramadhan is the month in which we revealed the Quran, which is guidance for people, a criterion of right and wrong. Hence, whoever is present in this month should fast. Anyone sick or on a journey, can complete the numbers on other days. God wants ease for you, not hardship. Hence, complete the numbers and establish God's glory as commanded. And be grateful for God's bounties. (Traditional translation)

The above is the traditional translation you can find in any translation of the Quran. Here is what we learn from the above translation.

Quran was revealed during the month of Ramadhan. But we are also told that the Quran was revealed over a period of 23 years. To overcome this discrepancy, they tell us the revelation of the Quran began in Ramadhan. Still not satisfied, they concocted another story that the Quran was brought down from the Highest Heavens to the Lowest in Ramadhan. Then, it was revealed to the Prophet little by little over a period of time. Anyway they have to invent a story whether it makes any sense or not. The fact is that Ramadhan did not get its name as a result of God's revelations. The root of the word Ramadhan **(رمضان)** is made of three Arabic letters raa, meem, and daad **(ر م ض)**, and it means intense heat that burns skin. It also means to sharpen the blade of a sword. If Ramadhan were a month during which the weather was very hot, then we can speculate that during the times of the Prophet solar calendar was in use, not the lunar calendar. Likewise, the months Rabi-ul-Awwal **(ربیع الاول)** and Rabi-ul-Thani **(ربیع الثانی)** are associated with the harvesting season. Even in Pakistan the harvesting season is called the Days of Rabi.

The next part of the verse describes the virtues of the Quran.

هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

This is Guidance for people and criterion of right and wrong. (Traditional translation)

The mention of these virtues of the Quran indicates that people will need Quran during "Shahar-e-Ramadhan" **(شهر رمضان)**. The very purpose of reminding us the virtues of the Quran is that we use the

Guidance and Truths of the Book to solve the problem humanity encounters.

فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

Hence, whoever is present in this month should fast. (Traditional translation)

This traditional translation is extremely vague. "Whoever is present" implies those who are alive. In other words fasting is mandatory only for those who are alive. This is a strange command. Do not we know that the dead cannot fast? To tell the people these commands are for the living implies that there are some commands meant for the dead. This is indeed a baloney. Quran was sent down for the living, not the dead.

There is a fundamental error in this translation. By depicting "Shahar-e-Ramadhan" **(شهر رمضان)** as a particular month, we opened the door and let in the Fasting **(روزه).** Let us ponder over this part of the verse once again.

فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

Henceforth, whoever witnesses this Shahar **شهر** *(state or situation) should stop (participating in or contributing to this state).*

Whoever witnesses (**فمن شهد**) implies this is a situation or condition in the society that people can see or observe. By translating "Shahida" (**شهد**) to mean "find" or "be present" (finding the month of Ramadhan or be present during the month Ramadhan) has distorted the meaning of the term. We can see that for such situations or conditions:

The Quran was revealed.

We must take guidance from the Quran to meet the challenges and overcome these conditions.

وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ

Hence, whoever is sick or on journey he should complete the number on other days. (Traditional translation)

Two types of people are exempt from fasting, sick and the traveler. Traditional translators consider sick to mean only a person who is physically ill. Likewise, they consider a traveler to be a person who travels on land only. Generally, Arabic word “Eiddah” (عَدّ) means to count. But it also means to be prepared. And the word “Ista'daad” استعداد (capability) is also derived from the root word “Eiddah” (عَدّ).

Next God Almighty says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

God wills ease for you, not hardship. Hence, complete the numbers and establish God’s glory as commanded. And be grateful for God’s bounties. (Traditional translation)

Please note that here God explains the wisdom behind Soum, which is supposed to do the following.

Bring ease or comfort, not hardship;

Complete the count;

Facilitate establishing God’s glory and appreciation of His bounties.

This verse includes a word “Bikum” (بِكُمْ), which means through you or with you. Mufassirin **(مفسرين)** Quran incorrectly translate it to mean “for you”. But “for you” Arabic has the word “Lakum" (لَكُمْ).

For the moment let us assume that Soum **(صوم)** means Fasting **(روزه)**, which is all about avoiding food and drink. Now we have a dilemma. The Fast **(روزه)** does not fulfill the wisdom described for Soum **(صوم)**. Humans are supposed to bring ease and comfort to the society through Soum **(صوم)** as well as establish God’s glory. The Fasting **(روزه)** can do none of these. It does not remove hardships (turmoil, unrest, anarchy, chaos, terror etc.) or bring ease and comfort to the society. Moreover, a fasting person **(روزه دار)** never acquires capabilities to establish God’s glory.

In brief this fasting, which is mere hunger and thirst, can never establish God’s glory. The poor fasting folks **(روزه دار)** are preoccupied with the food and drink during the entire month of Ramadhan. They cannot even think or imagine anything else. Far from establishing God’s glory by studying and enforcing His decrees, these hungry and thirsty folks cannot even think rationally or do anything practically. Indeed, establishment of God’s glory requires devising and implementing programs to reform the society and ensure God’s abundant bounties are distributed justly and equitably as well as used rightly.

Is saying “Thank God” enough to fulfill the obligation of “La'allakum Tashkurun” **لعلكم تشكرون** (Hence, be grateful.)? The answer is definitely no. Your verbal “Thank you” means nothing if you do not use the gift rightly. The person who gave you the gift feels hurt if you do not use the gift as it is intended. It matters nothing if you thank the gift giver every day. On the other hand if the gift giver sees you

using the gift appropriately, it brightens his day even though you did not say thank you. Likewise, the best way to thank God is to make the best use of His bounties, which He has bestowed upon us.

In the next verse God Almighty says:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

And when my servants ask about me (tell them) I am nearby. Whenever someone calls Me, I answer. Hence, they should move ahead and become righteous by following My decrees. (Traditional translation)

Please take a look at this verse with reference to Fasting **(روزه).**

"Where is your God?"

Did anyone ask a fasting person **(روزه دار)** this question during the past 1400 years? How is this question even related to a fasting person **(روزه دار)**?

Let us take a critical look at fasting **(روزه)** and Soum **(صوم)** again. Here is what Soum **(صوم)** does.

Soum **(صوم)** makes people Muttaqi "**متقی**" (virtuous). The first quality of a Muttaqi **(متقی)** is that he does not face East or West to worship God. Instead he lives his life according to God's commands at all times. Here are other characteristics of a Muttaqi **(متقی)**.

He becomes a Momin **مومن** (Peace Provider).

He spends his wealth and resources on the needy.

He establishes the system (social and economic) according to God’s decrees.

He builds a welfare state where everyone enjoys prosperity.

He never fails to fulfill his promises.

He is always stead fast in facing hardships and trials of life.

Whenever he sees chaos or disorder in the society, he not only distances himself from it but also prevents others from contributing to the disorder.

Quran was revealed to deal with such circumstances. Hence, he seeks guidance from the Quran and uses it as a criterion of right and wrong. Next, he tries to overcome the chaos and disorder and restore order and peace in the society.

He strives to acquire capabilities to achieve the above objective.

This blue print of action insures the society functions according to God’s decrees. And that is how God’s Supremacy is established.

Once God’s Supremacy is established, people will not fight over His abundant bounties. They will be shared justly and used rightly by all individuals of the society. There will be no stealing and quarrelling over God’s bounties. Hoarding and profiteering will not be allowed. A few powerful will not take control of all the bounties leaving little or nothing for the weak.

Doubtless, those carrying out the obligations of Soum will be questioned, “Where is such God?” Here we need to ponder over an important aspect of our Creator. Our Creator does not introduce

Himself as a “Being”. He says, “Provide loan to God” (اقراضوا الله قرضاً حسناً). But we don’t find God anywhere. Hence, we give a portion of our earnings to a needy person. Does providing a portion of our hard earned money to a needy person means giving to God? Yes, of course. Whenever such commands appear we spend a portion of our earnings either on the needy persons or give it to the state, which is governed by people who follow and implement God’s commands. Hence people who are busy carrying out Soum **(صوم)** may face questioning.

“Where is such God, i.e. benevolent system?”

“When or how this benevolent system will be implemented?”

Now let us study verse 187, which too is related to Soum **(صوم)**. God Almighty says:

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ ۖ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ۗ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

It is made lawful for you to go to your wives at night during fasting. They are your garment and you are theirs. God was aware of your dishonesty. He showed kindness and forgave your transgression. Now sleep with your wives and seek whatever God has ordained for you (as a result of intercourse). Eat and drink until the white thread appears distinct from the black thread. Then, complete the fasting until the night falls. But do not sleep with your

> *wives when you are in retreat in Masjids. These are limits set by God. Do not approach them. Thus God makes clear His Message to people so that they become Muttaqi* (upright)*. (Traditional Translation)*

Now let us see if the above translation is correct and it conveys the accurate message of the verse. Mufassirin **"مفسرین"** (traditional scholars of the Quran) explain that this verse allows men to enjoy intercourse with their wives at night during the fasting month. Women are your garment and you are theirs. People thought that they were not allowed to sleep with their wives at night during the fasting month. They thought they were committing transgression by sleeping with their wives at night. Now God granted them His approval and urged them to sleep with their wives. And whatever (child) is in the future as a result of the intercourse, they should look for it. Eat and drink until the ray of day break is distinct from the darkness of night. Then, complete the fasting until night falls. However, do not have any sexual contact with your wives while you are in retreat in the Masjids **(مساجد)**. These are limits set by God. Hence, do not ever approach them. Thus God makes His message clear so that they become Muttaqi.

Look and ponder. At the end of this verse once again it is repeated, "So that they become Muttaqi **(متقی)**". Does this type of fasting and intercourse with wives ever build Taqwa **(تقوٰی)** in men? What is the relationship between Taqwa **(تقوٰی)** and intercourse at night? Let us go further. Here are some questions that the traditional translation of this verse raises.

The verb or action in this verse is Rafas (**رفث**), which means bad mouthing or slandering. Our Mufassirin **(مفسرین)** translate it intercourse. Why? Does not Arabic language have the word "Mubasharat" (**مباشرت**) for intercourse? Mufassirin or Traditional

Scholars claim God is shy and could not say "Mubasharat" (intercourse) directly. Hence, He said "intercourse" indirectly by using the word "Rafas" **(رفث)** metaphorically. What a splendid explanation? But we got a problem here. How come God uses the word Mubasharat (intercourse) in the very next statement in the same verse?

What does Annisa (النساء) mean here? If God meant wife or wives, He would have used the correct word Zoj or Azwaaj "زوج or ازواج" (wife or wives). Annisa (النساء) not only means wives but mothers and sisters as well.

Instead of common noun Nisa (نساء) the proper noun Annisa (النساء) has been used. Who are these special women?

God Almighty says:

عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ

God was aware of your transgression. Yet he showed mercy and forgave you. (Traditional translation)

God knew what they were doing was transgression or treachery. Yet, God allowed them to continue with their treachery. Why? An evil is always an evil no matter one committed it yesterday or toady or plans to do so tomorrow. Hence, treachery is always treachery. God is flawless. He would never sanction an evil or wrong act.

Let us assume it was not a transgression in God's eyes. Rather people felt that what they were doing could be a transgression. Hence, God showed mercy and forgave them. But we still have a problem here. Quran clearly attributes the knowledge of this transgression to God, not humans. Further, if we attribute the knowledge of wrong doing to humans, God could have negated

their thought by saying, “This is what you think, but God did not forbid it.”

God Almighty says:

فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

Henceforth, sleep with them and seek what has been ordained for you as a result of this action. (Traditional translation)

“Henceforth, sleep with them” indicates that people were not coupling before. Rather they got the command to do it now in order to compensate for their transgression. Now we need to find out what the transgression was and how intercourse ended it.

God Almighty says:

وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

And seek what has been ordained for you. (Traditional translation)

Mufassirin (traditional scholars of the Quran) think “And seek what has been ordained for you” refers to the child conceived as a result of the intercourse. But we have seen that all Mufassirin translate “Kutiba Alaikum” (كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ) in the verse 2:183 to mean “What God has decreed to you”. But in this verse they translate it to mean a child who is not even born yet. Mind you not every intercourse results in conception and the birth of a child.

God Almighty says:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا

Eat and drink. (Traditional translation)

Eating and drinking does not always mean eating food and drinking water. It also means seeking knowledge and applying it. Here we need to discuss a bit more about the Arabic word “Kulu” (كُلُوا). When it is translated “eat”, then our attention is diverted to fasting, which prohibits eating and drinking. Now let us see how this word is used at other places in the Quran and what it really means there.

In verse 2:168 God Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

O dwellers of the earth! Eat the produce of the earth, which is good (حلال) and clean and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, as he is your sworn enemy. (Traditional translation)

This verse conveys two commands.

First, eat Halal **(حلال)** and clean or pure.

Second, do not follow the footsteps of Satan **(شيطان).**

Obviously, if we take “Kulu” (كلوا) to mean eat, then whoever follows Satan’s footsteps will be eating Haram **(حرام)** and unclean foods instead of Halal **(حلال)** and clean. If God commands us to eat Halal **(حلال)** and clean, Satan’s command is the opposite, i.e. eat Haram (حرام) and unclean. But we see that Satan is not giving any commands related to eating or drinking. He is commanding us something else, which is not even remotely related to eating. Take a look at the next verse.

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَن تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

He only commands you to commit evil and shameful acts. And that you talk about Allah of something you do not have any knowledge. (Traditional translation)

Arabic word Innama "انما" means "only". Hence, in the very beginning of the verse we are told that Satan specifically gives us two commands and both are not related to eating. Instead they both deal with moral and ideological aspects of humans.

"Su" (سوء) means vice and "Al-Su" (السوء) is proper noun. Hence, whatever Quran considers a vice is called "Al-Su" (السوء) in Arabic. This is the behavior Satan adopted against God's command. In Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقرة)** this behavior is termed disobedience and pride (Aba wa Astakabara "ابی و استکبر"). We can see two things in Satan's behavior.

Aba "ابی" (Disobedience)

Takabbar "تکبر" (Pride)

Both disobedience and pride are not things that we can eat or drink. Yet walking on the footsteps of Satan is termed as eating and drinking.

It would be worthwhile to study additional verses of Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقرة)** . Then, it will be clear to us that "Kulu" (**کلوا**) means to acquire knowledge of God's decrees and "Sharab" (**شرب**) means to apply this knowledge to our daily lives.

God Almighty says:

حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

Till the white thread of dawn distinguishes the black thread of night (Traditional translation)

Al-Fajr الفجر (the Dawn) is a proper noun. This is not a regular dawn that we see every morning at day break. Otherwise, the common noun Fajr فجرٍ (dawn) would have been used. Also, the verse does not say black thread will distinguish the white thread. Instead, it says white thread will distinguish the black thread. If it meant the morning rays would distinguish the white thread from the black thread, then Al-Fajr **"الفجر"** would be in subjective state. In that case we would see a damma **"ضم"** (vowel U) on the **"ر"** of **"الفجر"** and the white thread **(الخيط البيض)** would be in objective state. Also, the use of a proper noun Al-Fajr "**الفجر**" (the dawn) indicates that either this dawn has been mentioned before or it might be a new term used in the Quran.

Similarly, proper nouns have been used for the Arabic words that mean the white thread "**الخيط الابيض**" (day break) and the black thread "**الخيط الاسود**" (darkness of night). The same is the case with night. The Arabic word Al-Layil "**الليل**" (the Night) is a proper noun. Of course there is a reason for using the proper nouns instead of common nouns. We will discuss it later.

God Almighty says:

وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ۗ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا

And you must not have any sexual relations with them while you are in retreat in Masjids **مساجد** *.These are limits set by God. Do not approach them. (Traditional translation)*

Generally this command is thought to be related to the fasting of hunger and thirst. As a result religious folks retreat in the Masjids **(مساجد)** and consider it their greatest achievement. We are well aware of the above fact. But what does it mean by Tilka Hudood Allah "**تلک حدود الله**" (these are limits set by God) and Fa La

Taqrabuha “فلا تقربوها” (do not approach them)? We got a problem here if these “limits set by God” are related to fasting. There is only one command of fasting. Hence, it will be considered only one limit. Why is God talking about multiple limits?

Does the command “Do not even approach them” refer to the same one month of fasting? If so, what does it mean “do not approach the fasting”? If God meant the women, then the appropriate command would have been “Fa La Taqrbuhunna” (فلا تقربوهنَ).

Here we will repeat briefly all our concerns and questions about fasting, which is the traditional translation of the Quranic term Soum **(صوم)**.

Fasting **(روزه)** does not make people Muttaqi (righteous). We can find some attributes of Muttaqi (**متقی**) in verse 177 of Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقره)**. A fasting person **(روزه دار)** does not ever display or build even one of those attributes or characteristics.

Whoever has the power to fast, can avoid fasting by feeding a helpless. And the helpless can avoid fasting by feasting on the food provided to him.

If you are alive during the month of Ramadhan, fast. Otherwise, do not fast. This is a ridiculous statement and does not befit God.

Fasting does not lessen human sufferings.

Fasting does not bring ease to the society.

Fasting does not establish supremacy of God.

Nobody ever asks a Fasting person **(روزہ دار)** “where is your God?” and God responds, “I am nearby”.

Fasting persons **(روزہ دار)** are commanded to bad mouth or slander their women.

God knew people were committing treachery. Yet he ordered them to continue with their practice.

Al-Fajr (**الفجر**) means a special dawn. What is it?

What are “the white thread” and “the black thread”?

What is this special night called Al-Layil (**الليل**)?

Something permitted otherwise got forbidden in the Masjids **(مساجد)**. What was it and why forbid it?

Nobody pays attention to Verse 188 of Surah Al-Baqarah (**سورة البقرة**), which mentions the real purpose of Soum **(صوم).**

God Almighty says:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ
أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنتُمْ

You must not devour each other’s property wrongly or use a portion of it to buy favor with authorities, so that you could keep your ill gotten wealth.

The truth is that Soum **(صوم)** stops injustices in the society. It insures justice and peace for all citizens regardless of their status, creed, or color of skin. It safeguards human rights. Soum **(صوم)** is not the fasting of hunger and thirst.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOUM

In general fasting, which involves only hunger and thirst as a result of avoiding food and drink, fails to produce any desired results of Soum **(صوم)**, as mentioned in the Quran. Let us reexamine the same verses and try to understand them from within the Quran itself and see what picture of Soum **(صوم)** emerges.

OBJECTIVE OF SOUM:

First of all the stated objective of Soum **(صوم)** is that it produces Taqwa "**تقوىٰ**" (righteousness). Fasting **(روزہ)** never achieves this objective. Actually, we often find fasting folks to be hot tempered, quarrelsome, irritated, and disorganized. Please keep in mind the verse 177 of the same Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقرة)**, which we discussed on pages 9 and 10. Let us repeat some attributes or characteristics of Muttaqi "**متقی**" (righteous) here. Muttaqi or people endowed with Taqwa "**تقوىٰ**" (righteousness) use all their capabilities and resources to serve fellow human beings. To provide peace and security to humans is the most important aspect of Taqwa **(تقوىٰ)**. One can never be called a Muttaqi if he does nothing to promote peace and security in the society. Further, insuring justice for all, spending wealth to relieve burdens of others, building and maintaining a welfare state, fulfilling promises, and standing firm against all hardships and trials of life are some of the characteristics of a Muttaqi. Nobody can achieve these characteristics with the fasting of hunger and thirst. We need to struggle practically to acquire these noble characteristics or attributes. This struggle is called Soum **(صوم)**. In other words an individual performing Soum contributes the following.

He provides peace to others.

He keeps his wealth available for the benefit of others.

He strives to establish justice in the society.

He participates in building a welfare state where the needs of every citizen are taken care of.

It is his mission to bring prosperity to the whole nation.

He keeps and fulfills his promises.

He holds his ground in adverse circumstances.

Now let us take a look at some Terms used in the Quran.

SO YOU BECOME MUTTAQI لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

> *O ye who believe! Siam are prescribed to you, as they were prescribed to those before you, so that you become Muttaqi* **(متقی)**.

The teachings and practical steps undertaken by all the prophets sent to various nations fall under Siam **(صیام)**. Hence, Siam **(صیام)** is the name for practical steps or actions necessary to reform a society. But previous nations changed the nature of Siam **(صیام)** altogether by converting it to the fast of hunger and thirst. We followed their footsteps and converted Siam **(صیام)** into Fasting **(روزه)**.

LIMITED DAYS أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ

This term appears in the Quran at four places and twice it is related to the Jews. The Jews believed that they would face the requital for their misdeeds for limited days. In another place Muslims are instructed to remember God's Commandments abundantly during the days of God. The context of these verses implies that "Limited Days" is the period when wrong doers are punished and the righteous enjoy peace and prosperity, as a result of enforcing and acting upon God's decrees. It is also mentioned that if someone is sick or traveling, he can strive on other days to gain the same capabilities. The root of word "**عده**" is made of Arabic letters Ayn, Daal, Daal (ع د د), which means amount or quantity as well as to prepare. The subject of these verses is training and attaining capabilities. Hence, the sick (be it physical impairment or lack of knowledge) and the traveler (whether his journey is physical or ideological or mental) are allowed to obtain those capabilities on other days.

In brief Siam **(صیام)** are "The Days of Acquiring Capabilities". During this period the Momin **(مومن)** prepares for the reformation of the society. And those responsible for the chaos, anarchy, and terror in the society are restrained and punished.

فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

If anyone is sick or traveling, he can acquire the capabilities on other days.

This sickness may not be physical and the journey may not be on the land. Illness might be lack of knowledge and journey might be for gaining the knowledge or ideology. Hence, before committing to

the cause of Siam, a Momin (مومن) must overcome all his shortcomings and weaknesses. If he lacks knowledge, gain it. If he just begins his journey of acquiring knowledge and ideology, he should complete it before joining the program for the reformation of the society. But those who have the power to Soum (صوم), i.e. are prepared for Siam physically and ideologically, they should start Siam by taking care of the needy.

FEEDING THE NEEDY طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ

Those who have the power to Siam, feeding the helpless is their ransom.

What ransom? Did this person commit any offense to pay the ransom? Let me clarify here that the Siam used in these verses is for the reformation of the society. Certainly, he made an error for which he must pay ransom in the form of feeding the needy. Hence, those who have the capability should reform themselves. Please revisit verse 177 of Surah Al-Baqarah (سورة البقرة), which states that the righteous are those who despite their love for their wealth spend it on the needy. We can conclude that the Siam is made mandatory on those who were not fulfilling their duties, i.e. sharing their wealth with the needy. Taam (طعام) does not just mean feeding the hungry. This Arabic term includes all the necessities such as food, clothes, housing, education, health, honor, security, and justice.

FOLLOW GOD'S DECREES فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا

فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ

Whosoever obeys God's decrees does so for his own good.

Here Arabic word Tatawwaa (تَطوَّعَ) is used, which means obedience. Quran uses Khair (خَيْر) with two distinct meanings; God's revelations or decrees (2:105) and wealth or belongings. Here it means God's revelations or decrees because it refers to obedience. Whoever follows God's decrees and acts upon them, he does so for his own benefit. Basically, Siam is the term used for employing God's decrees or commandments to overcome and resolve all the conflicts facing humanity. Those carrying out the mission of Siam reap the rewards as well. **(**When problems are solved and conflicts resolved, everyone benefits. All citizens enjoy peace and security**)** . Next part of the verse clarifies this point even further.

AND SOUM IS GOOD FOR YOU

وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

And Soum is good for you if you knew.

This part of the verse describes wisdom behind Soum **(صوم)**. It produces Taqwa **(تقوٰی)**. Those who acquire Taqwa **(تقوٰی)** consider it their duty to spread God's bounties fairly and justly, so that no citizen is left deprived. This brings prosperity to the whole society. As a result those participating in the Soum **(صوم)** benefit as well. Moreover, prosperity brings peace and security to everyone.

In order to understand the meaning of Soum **(صوم)** in the verse 185, we must understand the words and terms used in the verse.

SHAHAR شهر

The root of Shahar contains three Arabic letters Sheen, Haa, and Raa (ش ه ر). It means well known or famous. Anything that becomes

famous is called Shahar **(شهر).** Some scholars derive the meaning of a month from Shahar **(شهر)** because 12 months of a year are well known. There are other words derived from Shahar, such as Mashhoor **(مشہور)**, Tashhir **(تشہیر)**, Mushahir **(مشاہیر)** and they too mean famous or well known.

Shahar also means to take out sword from its sheath. Hence, the meaning of sword and war were derived from the word Shahar.

In brief Shahar **(شهر)** means any event or saying that becomes well known or situation that involves bloodshed. Now let us see how Quran uses the words derived from Shahar **(شهر).** In the verse 2:194 God Almighty says:

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ

> *The prohibited month for the prohibited month and all things prohibited in retaliation. (Traditional translation)*

Can you draw any meanings from the above translation? Sure they named four prohibited months. But what does it mean the retaliation for them is prohibited months? The word Shahar **(شهر)** used here is singular, not plural. In other words God is talking about Shahar **(شهر)**, not Alshahar (الشهر).

How can we take retaliation for prohibited month Shahar with prohibited month Shahar? A month cannot be retaliated for another month. But we sure can return a good deed with another good deed or strike back for an evil act committed against us with something equal in magnitude.

Next part of the same verse 194 states:

فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

If someone commits aggression against you, you can retaliate likewise. And stay on God's Right Path (Taqwa تقویٰ*) Keep in mind that God is with those who walk aright.*

Now it is clear that any aggression can be paid back likewise. Hence, the retaliation for Shahar Alharam (شهر الحرام) is Shahar Alharam (شهر الحرام), which means Shahar Alharam (شهر الحرام) is a situation or condition prohibited under normal circumstances. But if an enemy ignores the prohibition and commits aggression, then you can retaliate likewise.

RAMADHAN رمضان

The root of Ramadhan is made of three Arabic letters Raa, Meem, and Daad **(ر م ض)**. It too carries two meanings. The first meaning is intense heat. The researchers believe that when Arabic calendar converted to Islamic calendar, this month was named Ramadhan because it fell in the year when there was intense heat. Later, there was a switch from solar to lunar calendar. But they kept the same names for months. Please consult the Lughat-Al-Quran **(لغات القرآن)** by Rashid Naumani for verification. The second meaning of Ramadhan is to sharpen the blade of a sword.

After clarifying the meanings of the Arabic terms Shahar **(شهر)** and Ramadhan (رمضان), we are ready to check the places in the Quran where either of these terms has been used. You will be surprised to see that the verses make sense once we use the correct meaning of the term or word.

God Almighty says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

To deal with a situation like Ramadhan (شهر رمضان) Quran is presented. It is Guidance for humans and criterion of right and wrong.

فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

Hence, whoever witnesses this situation or condition; he should refrain from contributing to it and restrain others as well.

We can see that Shahar Ramadhan (شهر رمضان) does not convey the meaning of witnessing a month. Moreover, the command says that whoever witnesses it should refrain himself and restrain others. This clearly implies that the command is not about a month. Humans neither witness a month nor can they refrain or restrain it. We can witness an accident or event or a physical change that we are capable of stopping. Hence, here we are referred to a situation or condition, which we must stop.

In verse 2:184 Soum **(صوم)** is mentioned in reference to taking care of the helpless. Now we are being commanded to refrain ourselves and restrain others whenever we witness a situation like Shahar Ramadhan (شهر رمضان) in the society. Evidently, Shahar Ramadhan is a situation or state when society is witnessing some type of evil. This evil could be warfare that might cause bloodshed. Or it could be a minor or major evil creeping in the society. Hence, whoever witnesses this evil; he should refrain from it and restrain others as well. Fal Yasumhu (فليصمه) means refrain self as well as restrain others. Those in a position of power and authority will restrain others

while ordinary folks will refrain. But there are some people who are not yet ready to fight the evil or take any responsibility for the reformation of the society. These people need to gain knowledge and develop their capabilities first. That is why God Almighty says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ
عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

> *God wills ease through you, not any hardships. And that you attain the capabilities and establish God's supremacy according to His decrees and be grateful.*

You can see that applying Soum **(صوم)** in life the humans can remove difficulties and create ease in the society. They need to acquire capabilities so that they could establish God's supremacy by making and implementing laws based on His decrees. When society lives under laws that conform to God's decrees, people enjoy God's blessings and bounties. Then, they can express their gratitude by making good use of God's bounties.

To appreciate God's bounties and blessings means to use them correctly and wisely. This means those who need the bounties most get them first. It also means to give the people their rights. Human Rights are a great blessing from God. That is where Soum **(صوم)** enters. Its aim is to provide people their rights. When you promote this ideology, people will certainly ask you; "Where is the blissful system that ensures our rights?" And you will respond that such system is almost ready. But there are two conditions narrated in the next verse, i.e. move forward and become peace provider to implement the system.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

And when my people ask about me, I am nearby. I hear whoever calls me and answer the caller. Hence, he should move forward and become a peace maker (مومن) by implementing My Commands. As a result others will heed the call as well.

According to this verse the purpose of Soum **(صوم)** is not only to avoid a situation that might result in disputes and even bloodshed, but it also means to change the situation with the help of God's decrees. In other words the aim is to establish God's supremacy that can resolve disputes and remove all difficulties as well as bring about ease and peace in the society.

You can see that Soum **(صوم)** is a program whose promoters strive to reform the society according to God's decrees. That is what verse 2:185 is all about. It tells us that when there is any chaos in the society, then we will use the Guidance from the Quran to fight the chaos and improve and reform the society. We will use Quran as the criterion for right and wrong. That is how we will establish God's supremacy on earth. As a result society will get rid of its problems and bring about ease and comfort to its citizens. Everyone will enjoy prosperity. When such a program will be presented to people, they will ask; "Where is that society or program?" In response they are told that such a blissful program is coming soon provided that people come forward and using Guidance from the Quran to establish peace in the society.

In the verse 2:187 Soum **(صوم)** is mentioned with reference to another problem in the society.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ
لَّهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ ۖ
فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

Mistreatment of Annisa النساء (Kami or common folks) had been widespread or considered acceptable behavior in the society. But they are your brothers and sisters (you all are the children of a common ancestor). God was aware of your treachery against your own people. Yet, he turned to you in favor and forgave you. Now you can establish cordial relations with them and take only what rightfully belongs to you.

Two words in the above verse need our attention. They are Rafas (رفث) and Annisa (النساء). Rafas (رفث) means bad-mouthing. The other term Annisa (النساء) not only means women but it also applies to the weak, deprived, and helpless folks of the society. The beginning of the verse shows that bad-mouthing or belittling the deprived was made lawful. Doubtless, God can never sanction this type of behavior. When bad-mouthing (mistreatment and belittling others) becomes accepted behavior in the society, the rich and influential treat the weak and destitute like Kami or untouchables. They abuse the poor verbally and physically without fearing any requital. As a result the weak lose their self-esteem and consider themselves worse than animals in front of the influential. Instead of fighting this evil and removing it from the society, our religious leaders turned the subject towards women folks. They changed the meaning of Rafas (رفث) from bad-mouthing to intercourse. Similarly they changed the meaning of Annisa (النساء) from the weak and destitute to wives. Hence, the whole subject of reformation of the society turned into ordinary relationship between a husband and his wife. WOW!

Please remember that neither God's decrees and His laws nor the consequences of the violation of those laws ever change. An evil is always an evil whether the time is past, present, or future. What was a vice yesterday cannot become a virtue today. If Rafas (رفث) was a vice yesterday, it is a vice today, and will be a vice tomorrow. It is inconceivable to attribute a vice to God. How could we say that God allowed continuing with the practice of bad-mouthing? Humans created such vices like bad-mouthing or belittling, not God. In other words the rich and influential elite in the society had made Rafas (bad-mouthing or abuse) of Annisa "النساء" (the weak and destitute) lawful.

The word Nisa (نساء) also appears in the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh. It is said that Pharaoh killed the Abna (ابناء) and spared the lives of the Nisa (نساء) of Bani Israel - the Israelites **(بنی اسرائیل).** Under the influence of Jewish traditions our traditional scholars tell us that Pharaoh had ordered the killing of all new born boys of Bani Israel. Let us see who were the Abna (ابناء) and Nisa (نساء) of Bani Israel **(بنی اسرائیل).**

Contrary to our traditional scholars' claims, Pharaoh declared his plan of killing Abna (ابناء) when Prophet Moses challenged him in his court. You can check the verse 2:49 where this order is attributed to the descendants of Pharaoh, not Pharaoh. And there is no mention of new born. The second place is verse 7:127 which states that after sensing Moses' rebellion against the regime, the chieftains asked Pharaoh if he was going to let Moses and his nation go. Pharaoh replied:

سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ

Doubtless, I will kill their Abna (ابناء) and spare their Nisa (نساء).

Third is verse 40:25 where Hamaan **(هامان)** and Korah (قارون) gave the following advice to Pharaoh.

اقْتُلُوا أَبْنَاءَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ وَاسْتَحْيُوا نِسَاءَهُمْ

Kill the Abna (ابناء) who accepted the peace with Moses but spare their Nisa (نساء).

Our traditional scholars translate the above verse like this.

Kill the new born sons of those who are believers and spare their new born girls.

There are many flaws in this translation. First, the occasion is when Prophet Moses visited the court of Pharaoh and challenged him, Hamaan **(هامان)**, and Korah **(قارون)**. Hence, Moses was an adult at his prime, not a new born. Second, the word Nisa (**نساء**) or Annisa (**النساء**) is used for an adult woman, not a new born girl. Third, Allazina Amanu "**الذين امنوا**" (those who are believers in peace) defines Abna "**ابناء**". Hence, correct translation for Abna Allazina Amanu "**ابناء الذين امنوا**" would be "Those Abna (**ابناء**) who became believers". What the Pharaoh would have gotten by killing the son of a believer? The adult believers in peace posed a challenge for Pharaoh's authority, not their infant sons. Adult or fully grown males possess the physical capacities and will power to rebel against a tyrant and bring about a change in the regime. These believers standing in front of Pharaoh were fully grown powerful males. But under the influence of myths and Jewish folk lore, our traditional scholars are hell bent on turning Quran into a book of Mythological Religion. Hence, wherever in the Quran there is a lesson for the ambitious and bold individuals to challenge the Pharaoh of times

and force him to restore human rights, our esteemed traditional scholars change the meanings, so that Abna **(ابناء)** of the nation feel helpless and give up their ambitions.

We went into detail to clarify the meaning of the Arabic word Nisa **(نساء)**. It is used for those men and women who are scorned and suppressed by the elite so much that these helpless folks cannot even raise their voices in protest or demand their rights. This is the meaning of Nisa **(نساء)** in this verse. Another word used in this verse is Layil (**ليل**). We need to clarify its meaning as well.

The same period called Shahar Ramadhan (**شهر رمضان**) in verse 2:185 is given another name Layilata Assiaam (**ليلة الصيام**) in the verse 2:187. The meaning of Assiaam (**الصيام**) is obvious. It is the period when people will work to stop evil, spread the good, and reform themselves. The dark night of this period stands for the days when nobody stops the evil or spreads the good. The tyrants continue with their tyranny and the victims cannot ask for justice or demand their rights. Quran calls this period Layilata Assiaam (**ليلة الصيام**). In other words this is the period when human rights are violated. This is a dark night for those who wish to reform the society. Now let us translate the same verse using these meanings.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ

It had been made lawful for you to mistreat helpless folks during the dark nights of tyranny.

During the times when human rights were being violated it seemed as if the society had sanctioned the mistreatment of helpless and destitute. The rich and privileged had no fear in bad-mouthing and belittling them.

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ

They are your garment and you are theirs.

It means these helpless folks you abuse, mistreat, exploit, and steal the fruits of their labor, are in fact your own people. You all had a common ancestor. Hence, you all, whether rich or poor, are related to each other. By stealing the fruits of their labor and abusing them, you were guilty of treason. Now the time has come to stop from indulging in such evil acts.

عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ

God was aware of your treachery against your own people. (You were stealing the fruits of their hard labor.)

فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ

Yet, God turned to you and forgave you.

A study of these verses reveals that there is a period when the elite think it is alright to abuse and mistreat the helpless in the society. The rich shun the poor and feel no guilt in stealing the fruits of their labor. This is the time when good people in the society must take action. They should stop the elite from committing these evils, so that God may turn to them in favor. But to earn God's mercy and blessings, they must stop their treachery first. God never changes His laws. Hence what was dishonesty or infidelity yesterday, cannot become honesty or fidelity today. Sadly, our forefathers never thought of applying treachery to violation of human rights or exploitation of the poor and helpless. Hence, they assumed the Arabic word Rafas (رفث) meant sexual intercourse. They considered this treachery and fabricated a story to support their view. They

never bothered to check it really meant bad-mouthing, defiling, or slandering. Applying this meaning we can understand the message of the verse. God Almighty is addressing the Rich Elites who shun the helpless in the society, treat them like untouchables, and exploit and mistreat them. God warns them that He was aware of their treachery but forgave them. Henceforth, they should mend their ways by stopping exploitation of the helpless, restoring social relations with them, and treating them like their own brothers/sisters.

فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

Henceforth, establish intimate relations with them and seek only what is legally yours according to God's decrees.

You can see how our Imams corrupted the pristine message of the verse by changing the meaning of word baashiru hunna (باشروهن) from socializing or intimate relations to sexual intercourse. The root of this Arabic word baashiru hunna (باشروهن) is Baa, Sheen, and Raa (ب ش ر). Taken literally it means direct contact. But semantically it carries two different meanings, i.e. to meet someone or convey good news. Our Mufassirin (مفسرين) focused on "to meet" and figured it meant sexual intercourse.

In this verse the word baashiru hunna (باشروهن) conveys its fundamental meaning and it suits the occasion and the subject under discussion. Here the topic is the sad and sorry state of the weak and helpless in the society. They are being exploited, degraded, and the fruits of their hard labor taken away from them in the broad daylight. The rich and influential shun them. God Almighty knew this and He considered it treachery. Nevertheless, He showed them His favor and forgave their past mistakes. Hence, they must

immediately stop this treachery and take steps to mend their ways. Now they must establish intimate relations with the weak and helpless (فالآن باشروهن). And convey the good news to them that the dark days of injustice and misery are over. From now on nobody will steal the fruits of their hard labor. They will no longer fear exploitation or mistreatment at the hands of the rich and influential. Instead of stealing the fruits of others' labor, everyone will seek only what is lawfully his/her, as ordained by God's decrees. This recourse demands that you study the revelations (the Quran), which distinguish between the right and wrong. Then, you will be able to identify the wrong traditions, customs, and faiths the society has embraced. That is why God Almighty says:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

> *Eat and drink until the dawn (الفجر) distinguishes the white thread from the black thread.*

Our Imams and Mufassirin **(مفسرين)** use the above verse to derive the times of fasting (روزه). According to them the white thread means the start of dawn. Likewise, they consider the black thread to mean the end of night. Further, they consider Min Alfajr (**من الفجر**) to mean morning. Hence, the traditional translation looks like this.

> *"Eat and drink at night until you see the dark thread of night distinguish from the white thread of morning."*

The first fundamental error in this translation is that human is being shown to be subject of this statement. There is no Arabic word in this statement that could be translated as "you see".

The second error is that the compound word "**الخيط البيض**" (the white thread), which is the subject, has been made object instead. Here

"الخيط الابيض" (the white thread) is the subject and "الخيط الاسود" (the black thread) is the object. Hence, it is the white thread that distinguishes the black thread. If we consider white thread to mean the morning ray or day break, it distinguishes the black thread or night ray. Night is already there. Hence, the morning ray does not distinguish the night. Rather morning ray heralds the beginning of the day.

The third error in this translation is not taking into account the use of Proper Noun. The morning (الفجر) is a proper noun. Hence, it is a special morning, not ordinary or common morning that we see daily at the beginning of the day. The same is the case with "الخيط الابيض" and "الخيط الاسود". They are compound words made up of adjectives and proper nouns. They do not stand for common whiteness of the day or blackness of the night. For the morning ray we see every day at day break the proper Arabic word would be "خيط ابيض". Likewise, the common blackness of night would be called "خيط اسود".

In brief both compound words contain adjectives and proper nouns. The white (الابيض) or the black (الاسود) describe the quality of the thread (الخيط).

The second important thing to consider is that the white thread distinguishes the black thread. In other words until the white thread shows up, nobody knows about the black thread. If it means regular or common night, then everyone knows it is night regardless of whether outside is pitch-black. Hence, it is something that will provide us with information about an upcoming thing or event.

Similarly, Alfajr "الفجر" (the morning or dawn) is proper noun. It represents a special morning, not the regular morning we witness daily. If it were a common morning, the Arabic word Fajr "فجر" would

be appropriate. But our clergy wants to present the Noble Quran as a book of mere religious rituals. Hence, they changed the meanings of the above Arabic terms to suit their needs for religious rituals.

Please remember that the words "the white thread", "the black thread" and "the morning" used in this verse are all proper nouns. Also, "the white thread" is the subject" that influences the object "the black thread".

All three components of this verse carry figurative or metaphorical expressions. Hence, we must find out what these words "the white thread", "the black thread" and "the morning" really mean. But we must insure their meanings convey the same message Quran intends and they fit in the context.

The Arabic word Alfajr "**الفجر**" appears in the Quran multiple times. But verse 78 of Surah Al-Asra **(سورة الاسراء)** tells us explicitly what Alfajr stands for.

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ
كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

> *Establish the system of Salat (صلوٰۃ) to bring forth the new Dawn and remove the darkness of tyranny with Quran Al-Fajr (الفجر).*

Here we are discussing Soum **(صوم)**, not Salat **(صلوٰۃ)**. Hence, I will mention Salat **(صلوٰۃ)** only briefly. Salat **(صلوٰۃ)** is not Namaz **(نماز)** but a system (executive, legislative, and judicial) we build according to God's decrees. This system results in a new dawn, which brings hope of prosperity, and removes the darkness of economic and social injustices from the society. That is what Quran Al-Fajr means.

With the sun rise the darkness of night disappears. Likewise the Quran is a shining light that causes the darkness of tyranny to disappear. The white thread represents the shining verses of the Quran while the black thread represents wrong traditions, customs, and beliefs prevalent in the society. Hence the shining teachings of the Quran will distinguish the wrong traditions and beliefs and remove the darkness of tyranny from the society.

Now let us take a look at the same verse again with brief translation.

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

Acquire the knowledge of God's Commandments and follow/implement them so that their shining light can help you identify and remove the wrong traditions and beliefs from the society.

ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ

Then, complete Assiaam (الصيام) till all darkness is removed.

In other words it is not enough to distinguish between the right and the wrong. We must also use Quran to bring the whole Night "الليل" (dark aspects of society) under the cover of Assiaam "الصيام". Please note that Al-Layil "الليل" too is a proper noun. It is not a common night we witness daily after the end of the day. It is a special night. Whenever human rights are violated and helpless are exploited in the society, Quran labels this period "The Dark Night" **(الليل)**.

This program of reformation demands that only those, who possess a sound knowledge and understanding of God's Book, should take part in its designation and implementation. Any good news before its time can cause trouble or chaos. Until the responsible persons

develop and implement the program of action according to the teachings of the Quran, it is no good to promise anything. Unfulfilled promises bring nothing but misery. Hence, God Almighty says:

وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ

You must not promise anything while you are still in the process of studying God's decrees and planning their implementation.

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ

These are limitations or boundaries set by God.

فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا

Do not ever come near or cross them.

It is obvious that incorrect or unreasonable expectations about God's decrees regarding human rights could bring in unfavorable consequences. The limitations set by God (**تلک حدود اللہ**) refer to God's decrees or commandments. These (**تلک**) points to Masajids **(مساجد)**, as the word Masajids **(مساجد)** is followed by the statement, "These are limitations set by God" (**تلک حدود اللہ**). Hence, Masajids **(مساجد)** are God's limitations **(حدود)**.

You can see that there are two conditions that make it necessary to stop someone going near something. The thing is a danger for the person or the person is a danger for the thing. Here both dangers are present. If people are told prematurely about the benefits of the program of reformation, there is a risk of failure. Those carrying out the program of reformation might be harmed. As a result the beneficiaries of the program may suffer.

To talk about these limitations **"حدود"** without understanding may bring in disastrous consequences. This command, "do not ever cross them" could not be about fasting. If it were about fasting, how come God's is commanding us not to go near them or cross them? Then, God Almighty says:

كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

That is how God clarifies his commandments, so that you achieve Taqwa **(تقویٰ)**.

These are the verses or decrees from our Lord that help us become Muttaqi **(متقی)**, i.e. be responsive to God's decrees or commandments. The sum and substance of these commands is Soum **(صوم)**, whose meaning and purpose is clarified in the next verse.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

You must not take away others' properties illegally. Nor you should offer a part of your ill gotten wealth to authorities (as bribes), so that you knowingly consume the rest for yourselves.

When we ponder over these verses and their correct meanings or message, we see a picture quite different from what our so-called Imams have been painting for us over centuries. We learn that Soum **(صوم)** is in fact a plan for action that helps us to undo our wrongs and develop the highest level of conscience or become conscious of God. We obey and follow God's decrees at all times. We make every effort to establish the just social and economic order based on God's decrees. Once we achieve this objective the

whole society enjoys peace and prosperity. Nobody is left helpless. Hence, it is in our own interest that we reform the society. If our society is healthy, every one of us benefits. If our society is sick, we all suffer. (2:183 & 184)

If selfishness and chaos take over the society, we can undo the damage and repair our society by taking guidance from the Quran and implementing a program of action based on God's decrees. That is how we can overcome the hardships and challenges the society encounters. This plan of action brings out the best in our character and capabilities. When people learn about such plan of action, they may wonder and ask how or when it would be carried out. The answer is that all learned persons, who understand God's decrees and know how to apply them, have to come forward to support and enforce the plan of action. (2:185 & 186)

Whenever society plunges into an abyss of darkness where the helpless are treated like untouchables, their hard earned wages withheld or consumed by the elite, their human rights violated, and it becomes a vice to socialize with them, that is when a plan of action is needed to undo all the wrongs. First, people must stop participating or promoting these vices. Second, all barriers separating the rich and poor must be demolished. Third, convey the good news to the helpless that the dark days of their misery are over. They are now the honorable members or the society like everyone else. Whatever they earn with their sweat and blood belongs to them. Nobody is going to steal the fruits of their labor any more. From now on we will use the criterion of the Quran for right and wrong. We will wipe out all the vices and bring society again to the right path. The reformation of the society would accomplish only

when Soum **(صوم)** encompasses every aspect of the darkness and uproots it from the society completely. (2:187)

However, prior to announcing the plan of action for the reformation of the society we must envision the questions people may ask and be ready to provide them with satisfactory answers. Hence, we must study and understand the Quranic decrees to prepare ourselves for this noble mission. We should never announce the plan of action prematurely, as it could harm the mission. In brief the purpose of Soum **(صوم)** is to stop vices, cure social and economic ills, and bring peace, security, and prosperity through reformation. Here is what Soum **(صوم)** does for the individuals and the society.

Soum **(صوم)** enables a person to become Muttaqi **(متقی)** .

Soum **(صوم)** brings comfort to the helpless.

Soum **(صوم)** is a plan of actions based on Quranic decrees. Its purpose is to identify and uproot the vices, and spread the virtues. When they see the injustice and economic exploitation of the helpless, all good persons (who understand God's decrees and know how to implement them) will join hands to stop these vices.

Soum **(صوم)** is the program of action that removes hardships and brings ease to the society.

Soum **(صوم)** helps individuals to acquire capabilities to fight and uproot vices.

Soum **(صوم)** is the program that builds a society by implementing God's decrees.

Soum (صوم) is the program that invites individuals to join the process of reformation. Hence, we can anticipate people questioning us when or how this noble program will be enforced.

Soum (صوم) is the program that invites every member of the society to come forward and join in the efforts to bring peace in the society.

Soum (صوم) is the program that removes the barriers between the rich and poor, the influential and the helpless, and insures everyone takes his/her fair share of God's abundant bounties honorably.

Soum (صوم) is the program that will bring an end to economic exploitations and human rights violations.

Soum (صوم) is the program that helps us to get rid of all the repressive ideas by taking guidance from God's decrees outlined in Quran Al-Fajr (قرآن الفجر).

This program would not be accomplished until its bright lights illuminate every corner of darkness.

But this program requires careful study and deliberations. Any premature announcement or action can produce adverse results. Hence, only persons well educated in God's decrees should participate in the development and implementation of the program.

The sum and substance of Soum (صوم) is that people should never steal the fruits of others labor or consume others wealth or property illegally. This practice of stealing from others and passing a portion of it to the authorities in order to keep the rest without fear of punishment creates chaos and anarchy in the society.

SOUM AS A PUNISHMENT

Now let us visit those places in the Quran where Soum **(صوم)** is mentioned and find out whether it is an act of reformation or a punishment of hunger and thirst. Please study verse 196 of Surah Al-Baqarah **(سورة البقرة)** carefully.

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۖ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا
رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهُ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِّن
رَّأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّن صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَإِذَا أَمِنتُمْ فَمَن تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى
الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ
وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۗ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Complete Hajj (حج) and Umrah (عمره) for the sake of Allah. But if you are restrained, then offer whatever you can gather for sacrifice. And refrain from shaving your head until your offering (the sacrificial animal) arrives at its landing-place (Mecca). If someone among you is sick or suffers from a disease of the scalp, his ransom is fasting or charity or sacrifice. Afterwards when you feel safe, perform Umrah (عمره) followed by Hajj and offer whatever sacrificial animal you can grab with ease. Anyone who cannot afford a sacrifice, he must fast for three days during Hajj and seven days upon returning home. That is ten days in total. This command is only for those who do not reside near the vicinity of Al-Masjid Al-Haraam (المسجد الحرام). And be mindful of Allah and beware that Allah is stern in retaliation. (Traditional translation)

Here is what we learn from traditional translation of this verse.

If you are arrested or restrained by enemy during your journey to Mecca for Umrah **(عمره)** or Hajj **(حج)** , then ship to Masjid Al-Haraam **(مسجد الحرام)** whatever sacrificial animal you can grab. Do not shave your head until your sacrificial animal reaches Masjid Al-Haraam **(مسجد الحرام)**.

But if someone is sick or suffers from a disease of the scalp, he must pay a ransom in the form of fasting or charity or sacrifice.

When you feel safe and want to perform Hajj after Umrah **(عمره),** then you must offer sacrifice again. If you cannot afford a sacrificial animal, then fast three days during the Hajj **(حج)** and seven days when your return home. This command is only for those who do not live in the vicinity of Masjid Al-Haraam **(مسجد الحرام).**

Be mindful of Allah and beware that Allah is stern in retaliation.

Now let us study the first command related to a certain situation. Someone left home for Umrah **(عمره)** or Hajj **(حج)** but got caught while crossing through an enemy's territory. He is a prisoner now. There are restrictions on his movements. Despite this he is obliged to buy a sacrificial animal with whatever money he possesses. Now he must send this animal to Mecca. Please take a moment to ponder.

How will a prisoner buy a sacrificial animal in a hostile country? Will the enemy let him leave the prison to buy an animal for sacrifice?

Where will he find the money to buy a camel or cow or ram?

Who will arrange for him to purchase a sacrificial animal?

Who will transport the animal to Mecca?

In the light of present day situations some traditional scholars say that he would just send money. Is it easy to send money from a hostile country? Would not the prisoner invite additional punishment for trying to smuggle money outside the country?

This interpretation of Islam has been passed to us for the past 1400 years when people used to travel on camels or foot. How would a prisoner in a hostile country carry out all these commands? In other situation when the prisoner becomes sick or has to shave his head due to a disease, he is loaded with additional burdens. Take the example of someone who suffers from diabetes. He got rash on his scalp and had to shave his head. Now he must do one of the three.

Fast. How can a diabetic fast without risk to his life?

Give his wealth in charity. He is already a prisoner and all his belongings have been taken or confiscated. What can he offer for charity and to whom?

Offer sacrifice. He already spent whatever he had in his possession on the sacrificial animal that he shipped to Mecca. How will he buy another sacrificial animal? Some traditional scholars translate Nusuk "**نسک**" to mean worship. What is this new worship? He is already performing Namaz **(نماز).** But he cannot perform Hajj or fast or offer for charity.

All the above conditions are unacceptable and unworkable for a prisoner. Particularly fasting can prove to be a killer. It could send him to his grave.

> *Afterwards when you feel safe, perform Umrah (عمره) followed by Hajj and offer whatever sacrificial animal you can grab with ease. Anyone who cannot afford a sacrifice,*

he must fast for three days during Hajj and seven days upon returning home. That is ten days in total. This commandment is for those, who do not live near Masjid Al-Haraam (مسجد الحرام). (Traditional Translation)

There is something fishy about this translation. According to this translation the above command applies only to those folks who do not reside near the vicinity of Masjid Al-Haraam **(مسجد الحرام).** In other words the outsiders are subject to liabilities and penalties but the local residents of Mecca enjoy total freedom from any obligations. Are the residents of Mecca Allah's darlings? The reality is that outsiders deserved the ease, not the locals.

Let us study the Arabic words or terms used in the verse 2:196.

AL-HAJJ الحج

The root of this word is Haa, Jeem, Jeem (ح ج ج). Many words such as Hujjat **(حجت)**, Hajaat **(حاجات)**, Ehtejaj **(احتجاج)**, and Mohtaj **(محتاج)** are derived from this root. All these words have Hajat **حاجت** (need) obvious. This is an action that requires discussion and dialogue and results in meeting the demands or needs of people. Any complaints or protests by people to gain their rights or fulfill their needs fall under this term. This word is a proper noun. People can perform Hajj in a thousand different ways. However, the Hajj mentioned in this verse is a special Hajj (الحج).

AL-UMRAH العمره

This word is a proper noun as well. Its root is Ayn, Meem, and Raa (ع م ر). It means live or spend life or settle down. Whether we live during the times of peace or turmoil, we must obey God's commandments. Even if we are forced to protest to gain our rights,

we must do so without abandoning our commitment to God's decrees. But we assumed that Lillah (لِلّٰه) meant the way to please Allah. Hence, we converted Al-Hajj **(الحج)** and Al-Umrah **(العمره)** to methods of worship. The truth is that Umrah **(عمره)** means the life spent peacefully during the times of peace while Hajj means protest to restore or take back rights. Unrest in the society and even rebellion and war fall under this term called Hajj. War is the biggest form of protest. Hence, it is called "Hajj Akbar" **(حج اکبر).**

It is obvious from the next part of this verse that it is not a peaceful setting. It says if you are restrained (**فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ**). When people are restrained they face turbulent or unfriendly situation. This hostile environment may lead to agitation and protest. Hence, to deal with this situation God commands us to take whatever guidance is available (**فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ**). Al-Hadah (**الهدیٰ**) too is a proper noun. Our Imams translated it to mean sacrifice. By doing this they have envisioned a God who is thirsty of blood. Hence, shedding blood in God's name, i.e. sacrificing animals, is considered a virtue that brings rewards. Once upon a time wild nations slaughtered beautiful women and children at the altar to please their gods. The same ritual is still being performed. The only difference is that animals have replaced young women and children.

The root of AL-Hadah (**الهدیٰ**) is Haa, Daal, and Yaa (**ھ د ی**). It means guidance. Those who protest take the risk of arrest. If this happens and you are cut off from the guidance or instructions, then you should act upon whatever guidance you can find. But you must take precautions to keep the enemy in dark about your next step or the direction of the movement or protest. That is why God commands them not to make a circle around their leaders (**وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ**). If

enemy learns about the leaders and arrests or restrains them, it could be a severe blow to the movement.

If you have any disagreement with your leader over the direction of the movement or lack of capabilities, you should first overcome these obstacles, i.e. acquire capabilities through appropriate training and resolve any differences with your leader.

When some among you are deficient in capabilities (فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا) or you are under fire from you leader (أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِّن رَّأْسِهِ) because of your deficiency, you should get training to overcome your deficiencies or demonstrate that you are capable of carrying out the task or duties entrusted to you. Many things can cause differences or disputes between followers and the leader. It could be bad mouthing, disobedience, or some disagreement over the strategy. Hence, God commands that there should be no bad mouthing, disobedience, or quarrelling during the protest (حج). These are circumstances that warrant training sessions or courses during Hajj or protest.

فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ

Hence, whoever does not find guidance he/she has to complete training sessions to learn how to avoid bad-mouthing, disobedience, and quarrel when there is a disagreement. Additional training sessions will enhance your knowledge, skills, and capabilities. This is indeed good for the whole society.

ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

This command is for those who lack the ability to obey and carry out orders that place restrictions on them. Follow the path of God (تقوىٰ) and beware that God is severe in retribution.

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ ۚ فَمَن فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ۗ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمْهُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

The reasons for the Protest (حج) are obvious. If anyone has objections or wants to argue about these reasons, he/she can do so without bad-mouthing, disobedience, and quarrel. And God is aware of whatever good you do. The more good you do is better for you, as all your actions that conform to God's decrees bring good back to you. O people of knowledge and wisdom, follow and enforce My decrees and commands at all times.

In brief this verse commands us not to indulge in slandering, law breaking, and quarrelling during the Protest. These are the three Siam, which means to guard against these three human weaknesses. Afterwards whatever good we do is known to God. All our actions must conform to God's decrees or laws at all times. If we do so, we receive in return nothing but good. In other words as we sow, so shall we reap.

Please note that twice these commandments talk about being Conscious of God. First, near the end of the verse 196 we are commanded to conform to God's decrees (وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ). Next, the people endowed with knowledge and wisdom are commanded to follow God's decrees or commands at all times (وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ).

Obviously, these commands are addressed to the scholars, intellectuals, and leaders of the nation, not the common folks. Hence, Hajj is a gathering of the scholars and leaders, not the whole public. These scholars and leaders are commanded to conform to God's decrees while carrying out the duties of Hajj. The more their actions and affairs conform to God's decrees, the better for them. As a matter of fact all good actions bring good results. These commands are meant for the scholars, intellectuals, and leaders because they will be responsible for carrying out the planning and actions of Hajj. But this does not mean the general public will be kept in the dark about their rights. However, it is the responsibility of the learned persons to educate the people about their rights. Also, the learned persons are in a better position to convey the voice and concerns of the public to the relevant authorities.

SUMMARY:

These verses deal with a situation that demands discussion, dialogue, or protest. During the protest people can get surrounded, restrained or imprisoned. As a result tempers can flare and there is risk of disobedience to the leaders. Hence, God commands that if you are in dispute with the leadership, there are three ways to compensate. First get training. If the dispute is due to your lack of capability in certain area, then acquire the capability through training. If that is not possible, then do something to prove you are right. If that too is not possible, then the leadership can prescribe an action plan for you. Once the protest is over and peace returns, more training sessions may be prescribed for you. Unlike peace, Hajj is a state of worry, misery, and protest. Hence, from peace to protest whatever guidance is available follow it. If no guidance is

available, then you have to undertake three training sessions. This training will empower you how to avoid bad mouthing, disobedience, and quarrel. These are the training courses mentioned in the next verse.

فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ

Slandering, disobedience, or quarrel is not allowed during the Protest.

This command indicates that the disobedience mentioned in verse 2:196 was the result of a dispute with the leadership and it had escalated to bad mouthing or defiance or quarrel. To mend this situation three training courses are prescribed. But there could be more courses once protest is over and peace returns. The end result of Hajj is peace, which brings prosperity for the society.

SURAH AN-NISA, VERSE 92

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَن يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَأً ۚ وَمَن قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَأً فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ
مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَن يَصَّدَّقُوا ۚ فَإِن كَانَ مِن قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ
مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۖ وَإِن كَانَ مِن قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ
مُّسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۖ فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ
مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيم

A believer should never kill a believer. But if a believer kills another believer accidentally, his compensation is to free a believing slave and pay a ransom to the family of the victim unless they waive it willingly. If the victim was a believer but belonged to a nation hostile to you, then freeing a believing slave should be enough. If the victim came from a nation that has a treaty with you, then victim's family should receive a ransom as well as freeing a believing slave is in order. However, if he is not capable

of fulfilling the above demands, he should fast for two months as a way of repentance to God. And God is knowledgeable and wise. (Traditional Translation)

This verse deals with a situation where God announces punishment for the killer of a believer (مومن). The punishment prescribed in this verse seems to apply to both accidental and intentional murder. Before this verse we learn about a war situation. We are told that during the war the believers may encounter many types of people. There are some people who make excuses to avoid fighting in the war. These are not our comrades. However, we must put them to trial. If they come forward to support us in the war, then they are our comrades. Others may belong to a nation with whom we have a treaty. If these people do not join us in the war, they can be excused. Because of the treaty, they are not accountable and cannot be punished. Third type includes those people who claim to be with us. But they also claim allegiance to their own nation. But at the times of trials they fall flat on their bellies. If these folks do not mend their ways, we can hold them accountable and even fight them till they sue for peace. In this background the verse 4:92 comes into play.

Please notice that during the times of war if a believer kills another believer, then there are three ways to deal with the killer. In the first case, he has to free a believing slave only. In the second case he has to free a believing salve as well as pay a ransom to victim's family. If the killer is unable to fulfill the above, he must fast for two months. In other words if the killer cannot buy freedom for a believing slave or pay the ransom to the victim's family, he must fast for two months. In other words the punishment for committing a murder is just fasting for two month. A killer is given a punishment that is not even enforceable. Who can stop a person from drinking

water? When a person visits restroom to answer the call of nature or enters a bathroom or stream to take shower, nobody can stop him from drinking water. While taking bath he can gulp enough water to quench his thirst for the rest of the day. Once thirst is gone, fasting is no big deal for the killer.

Doubtless, killing another soul is a horrible crime. But first we must determine whether the killing was accidental or intentional. If the killing was an accident, there is no point in imposing a punishment. What the killer needs is reformation so that he would not commit the same mistake again. He needs more training in warfare. Otherwise, he might repeat the same mistake. Here Soum **(صوم)** is the training course that helps a believer to avoid killing another believer by mistake. Even modern armies go through intensive training to prevent casualties from friendly fire.

In brief Soum **(صوم)** does not mean we stop eating or drinking. Rather it is training to avoid the situation where a believer might kill his own comrade by mistake during the heat of war. Please note that we used the traditional translation of the verses to prove that Fasting **(روزه)** can never replace Soum **(صوم)**. [Believer here means the one who submits to Islam (peace).]

SURAH AL-MAEDA, VERSE 89

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن يُؤَاخِذُكُم بِمَا عَقَّدتُّمُ الْأَيْمَانَ ۖ
فَكَفَّارَتُهُ إِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسَاكِينَ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ
أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ ۖ فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا
حَلَفْتُمْ ۚ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُون

God will not hold you accountable for your vain or trivial oaths. But He will certainly take you to task for the oaths that you swear under a treaty. If you break such an oath,

> *the ransom is feeding of ten needy persons with almost the same amount of food you provide for your own family or clothing them or freeing a slave. If you cannot afford the above, then fast for three days. This is the ransom for your sworn oaths. And fulfill your oaths. This is how God clarifies his decrees, so that you might be grateful. (Traditional Translation)*

This is what we learn from this traditional translation.

Vain or trivial oaths are not accountable.

Only oaths sworn under a treaty are accountable.

But there is a ransom for breaking the sworn oaths.

Feeding ten needy persons, or

Clothing ten needy persons, or

Freeing a salve, or

Fasting for three days.

First of all this translation gives a huge relief to the culprit, as it fails to mention any compensation for the other party, which may have suffered losses due to breaking of the oath. Secondly, the punishment is the same regardless of how much loss was inflicted, lesser or greater. Thirdly, the culprit is given even more astonishing relief. If he cannot feed or clothe ten needy people, he can free a slave. Is a human being cheaper than what it costs to feed or clothes ten needy persons? The relief does not stop here. If he is unable to feed or clothe ten needy persons or free a salve, he can do something much easier, i.e. fast for three days. Yes, fast for three days. What a tremendous relief?

Does not this look so easy for someone to get out of all promises and obligations by just staying hungry and thirsty for a few hours? Actually, it is just hunger of a few hours because water is available everywhere to quench the thirst. Doubtless, Soum **(صوم)** cannot be fasting that facilitates breaking of promises under oath.

The real subject of Surah AL-Maeda **(سورة المائده)** is keeping promises and oaths. This verse deals with breaking promises. People break promises in order to do something that is not permissible to them otherwise. In other words it is about breaking society's rules and regulations. In the previous verses 87 and 88 we are warned not to hold back or declare unlawful good things of life that God has made lawful for us. And not to exceed the limits set by God, as He does not like the transgressors. Seek only what God has declared lawful for you. And follow God's decrees so that you become peace makers. After that the verse 89 states that there is no blame if you fail to fulfill your promise or oath unintentionally. However, you are accountable if you break a promise intentionally. Then, you must do one of the following.

- Feed and clothe the needy people in the society.

- Pledge in writing so that you can be held responsible for your actions.

- Make yourself available for the training so that you become a responsible citizen and avoid actions that harm the state.

SURAH AL-MAEDA, VERSE 95

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۚ وَمَن قَتَلَهُ مِنكُم مُّتَعَمِّدًا
فَجَزَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ هَدْيًا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ

أَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسَاكِينَ أَوْ عَدْلُ ذَٰلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِ ۗ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنتَقِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ

O you who believe! Do not hunt animals while you are in the state of Ahram (احرام). But if any of you kills an animal intentionally, then the ransom is a similar animal. A bench of two judges will decide about the sacrifice to be sent to Kabah (کعبہ). Or the ransom is feeding a needy or fasting as its equivalent, so that he tastes the bitter fruit of his action. God forgives whatever happened in the past. But if someone repeats it, then God will avenge. And God is Mighty Avenger. (Traditional Translation)

We learn from the above verse that if someone is in the state of Ahram **(احرام)** during Hajj **(حج)** he is forbidden to kill an animal. If he violates this command and kills an animal, then he has to pay a ransom. His ransom is to find an animal similar to the one he killed and send it to Kabah **(کعبہ)** for sacrifice. A bench of two judges will examine the animal to make sure it meets the requirement, i.e. it is exactly like the animal he killed. Of course he has the option of feeding a needy or fasting as its equivalent.

The commentators of the Quran explain the wisdom, which is to punish the violator. Under this punishment he is forced to kill another animal exactly like the one he killed before. Does this sound like a reparation or punishment? This translation does not explain what animal's meat will be feed to the needy and who will hunt for it. The absurdity of this translation is obvious. Will we set up a court of two judges to decide whether the bird or animal offered as a ransom is exactly like the one the violator killed? Will God personally retaliate if the violator kills another animal intentionally?

Do you think a bench of two judges is needed for this type of job? This might make sense only if it involved the murder of a human

being. Hence, if repeated, God would personally avenge the murder.

It makes no sense to translate Antum Hurumun (انتم حرم) to mean "when you are in the state of Ahram (احرام)". Actually, Surah AL-Maeda **(سورة المائده)** deals with agreements or contracts. And it highlights the importance of fulfilling our oaths and contracts. That is why the Surah begins with these words.

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

O you who believe! Fulfill your promises and oaths.

But later the translators wrapped alien meanings around these verses and messed up the real message. They made us believe these verses were about Hajj, a ritual in which the participant removes his clothes and wraps his body in two sheets of cloth called Ahram **(احرام)**. Hence, they translate Antum Hurumun "انتم حرم" to mean "when you are in the state of Ahram **(احرام)**". What the oaths and contracts or covenants have to do with wearing Ahram **(احرام)**? The correct meaning of Antum Hurumun (انتم حرم) is "you are bound by". In other words whatever oaths or promises you have made, you must abide by them.

The verse 95 is all about fulfilling contracts or oaths and the consequences of breaking them. Hence, when you are in a state of Antum Hurumun (انتم حرم), i.e. bound by the contract, you cannot violate any terms of the contract. The Surah mentions restrictions enforced in certain circumstances. The restrictions include imprisonment as well. If someone violates the terms of imprisonment, then two honorable judges will decide his fate. As a punishment he has to provide the necessities for the needy persons or undergo a training course for his personal reformation. This

training course is termed Siam (صيام). The same justices will decide the type and duration of the training course whose purpose is to help the trainee avoid committing the same mistake again. But if he repeats the same mistake again, he will receive severe punishment from the authorities. Please remember that the subject of the Surah Al-Maeda (سورة المائده) is the agreements and contracts between people as well as the nations.

SURAH AL-MUJADALAH, VERSE 4

We need to study this verse because according to the traditional translations it mentions fasting for two months. Should we shed tears for the foolishness of the commentators of the Quran or our own lack of wisdom? We never think twice to realize that the commentators' narratives are totally absurd and irrational.

Our beloved Imams have concocted a story about the revelations of this Surah. It is said that a companion of the Prophet called his wife "My Mom" in a fit of rage. Arabs call this Zahar (ظہار). His wife visited the Prophet and complained. God was hearing the conversation between the Prophet and the destitute lady. Hence, He revealed this Surah.

وَالَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا قَالُوا فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَتَمَاسَّا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ تُوعَظُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Those who commit the Zahar (ظہار), i.e. call their wives their mothers, utter something baseless. Their wives are not their mothers. Their mothers are only those women who gave birth to them. Hence, what they utter is not true. But after calling their wives their mothers if they want to return back to their wives, then they must free a salve before they can touch their wives again. This is advice for you and God is aware of whatever you do.

فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَتَمَاسَّا ۖ فَمَن لَّمْ
يَسْتَطِعْ فَإِطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ
اللَّهِ ۗ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

If you cannot afford the above, then complete fasting for two months before you can touch your wives again. If it is beyond your capacity, then feed sixty needy people, so that you have faith in God and His apostle. These are God's limitations. And a horrible punishment is in store for the disbelievers. (Traditional translation)

The sum and substance of the above is that if a person calls his wife his mother. Then, he cannot enjoy intimate relations with his wife unless he fulfills one of the following three conditions.

- Frees a salve
- Fasts for 2 months
- Feeds sixty needy people

After we pass beyond the cause of this revelation and the traditional translation of the beginning verses, the subject of the Surah seems to change. The verse 5 indicates that issue under discussion is not a quarrel between a husband and wife. Rather it is a conspiracy against the government or authority. Please ponder over these statements.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ كُبِتُوا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ وَقَدْ
أَنزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ ۚ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

Those who oppose God and His Messenger, they will face humiliation and annihilation like those who lived before them. And we have revealed clear decrees. And there is severe punishment for the disbelievers in peace.

Obviously, people were not quarrelling with their wives. They were opposing God and His Messenger. And that was not something new. Throughout history people have opposed God and His Messengers.

Please notice that Zahar **(ظہار)** can turn a person into disbeliever. But a person does not become a disbeliever by calling his wife his mother. Only hostility or conspiracy against God and His Messenger can turn a person into disbeliever. Next God says.

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا ۚ أَحْصَاهُ اللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

That day they will stand before God and face the charge sheet. God has recorded everything and God is witness to everything though people may forget what they did during their life time.

A time will come when everyone will be held accountable for his/her actions. In the court of God Almighty they will see the whole record of their lives revealed in front of them. And God Himself will be a witness to everything they did during their short lives.

Next verse (7) confirms that it was indeed a conspiracy against the authorities. Did not you see (الم تر)? Obviously, it was something people can see or witness while living on earth. Hence, wherever in the Quran the term Alam Tara (الم تر) is used, it is related to this world. Please ponder over this verse.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ مَا يَكُونُ مِن نَّجْوَىٰ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ مِن ذَٰلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ۖ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Are not you aware that God knows all that is in the Heavens and the Earth? It is not possible that three people consult in secret and God not be there as the fourth or five people confer and God will be among them as the sixth. Those who plan in secret be they small or large in number God is always present among them. On the Day of Judgment (Retribution) God will reveal whatever they had done. God has full knowledge of everything. (Traditional Translation)

Obviously, it was not a quarrel between husband and wife. Rather a secret plot against the Prophet is being revealed. This is made even further clear in the next verse.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نُهُوا عَنِ النَّجْوَىٰ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَيَتَنَاجَوْنَ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ وَإِذَا جَاءُوكَ حَيَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَيَقُولُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ ۚ حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۖ فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

Have not you seen those who were warned not to confer in secret? But they keep backsliding. They talk in secret about committing sins, violence, and disobedience to the Prophet. When these folks visit you, they greet you with salutations not condoned by God. When they are with their own kind, they boast about why God cannot punish us for what we say. But they are headed straight to their final abode, the hell, which is the worst place to live.

The above verse leaves no doubt that the issue of Zahar "ظہار" was not about a husband calling his wife "mother". Rather it referred to secret conspiracies to commit violence or disturbance against the authority. Hence, they were warned not to plot in secret. But they kept backsliding. As a result several forms of punishments were prescribed for them. Those included a written statement so that they could be held accountable if they backslide again, or enroll in a

training program for their reformation, or take care of the needy people.

The above verses contain some words worth pondering. They are Taamu Miskeen (**طعام مسکین**) and Tahriru Raqabah (**تحریررقبۃ**). Generally, Taam (**طعام**) is considered to mean food and drink. In fact it includes all the necessities for a human being, such as food, clothes, home, education, and medical aid. Similarly, Tahriru Raqabah (**تحریررقبۃ**) is translated to mean freeing a salve. In reality Tahrir (**تحریر**) means something in writing. Hence, Tahriru Raqabah is a written statement that allows authority to take to task the person (or persons) who backslides after writing his promissory note. It can also be used to help someone who is in trouble.

In short it depends how you look at these commandments. If you believe that these commandments are virtuous and workable in all times and spaces, then we can derive the meaning of freeing a slave only if Islam allows slavery. If nowhere in the Quran human trafficking or human trade is allowed, then Tahriru Raqabah (**تحریررقبۃ**) cannot mean to free a slave. On one hand we claim Islam is the most virtuous and civilized religion that promotes nothing but the highest moral values. On the other hand countless barbaric laws and regulations have become part of Islam under the influence of Fiqh (**فقہ**) and Ahadith (**احادیث**). As a result we find nothing civilized or humane in the present day Islam.

Some apologists say Muslims are at fault, not the Islam they follow. Do not they know that a religion is known by the people who practice it? Look at the personality and character of today's Muslims. Can you call them righteous or civilized? Their wild faces and rude looks not only strike terror in children but also frighten

adults. There is no country left in the world where these fanatic Muslims have not shed the blood of innocents. What is the cause of this? The answer is that the ideas and teachings poured into their heads present these crimes against humanity to be something very noble or glorious.

Muslims are not alone. Virtually, every nation is guilty of crimes against humanity. But gradually other nations overcame their negative ideas and thoughts, which promoted violence against others. Sadly, we are still glued to those violent ideas and thoughts that were never part of the Quran or our True Islam. Since we invented a phony Islam under the influence of tribal system of Arabian Peninsula and Zoroastrian Imams, we take tremendous joy and pride in robbing and killing others. The Islam that Prophet and his companions followed was based on the teachings of the Quran. The focus of this True Islam was human rights, not ritual worship.

The Soum **(صوم)** mentioned in the Surah Mujadalah **(سورة مجادلہ)** is the training for those situations we discussed earlier. In brief this training helps a person to reform his behavior, give up evil ways, and live life according to the teachings of the Quran. The subject of this Surah is Zahar (ظہار), i.e. conspiracies against the Islamic State. Hence, to deal with this situation the conspirators will be offered the opportunity to reform themselves through training that will also teach them obedience to the authority.

THE SOUM OF SYEDA MARYAM

The Quran mentions Soum **(صوم)** of Syeda Maryam **(سیده مریم)** in Surah Maryam **(سورة مريم)** verse 26 as follow.

فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا ۖ فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنسِيًّا

Eat, drink, and keep your composure. If you see any human being, say I have pledged a fast for the Most Gracious. Hence, I will not talk to any human being today. (Traditional Translation)

We learn the following things from the above verse.

Maryam (Mary) could eat and drink while she was fasting.

She was allowed to speak during her fasting.

She observed only one fast and it was a continuous fast, as whenever she saw a human being she was instructed to say that she had vowed a fast for the Most Gracious.

Maryam (Mary) refers her fast to the Most Gracious.

Please note that Maryam's fast allowed eating and drinking. When we ask our religious gurus about this discrepancy, they respond that fasting in Maryam's Sharia **(شریعہ)** did not forbid eating and drinking. Instead her Sharia **(شریعہ)** had fasting of speech. But the next part of the verse does not support this argument. It clearly says that if you see a human being, say I have vowed a fast for the Most Gracious. In other words Maryam's fast allowed her to speak. Did Maryam announce her fast without speech? Our honorable traditional

scholars respond that she might have spoken in gestures. Does that make any sense? If she were supposed to communicate in gestures, God Almighty would have certainly commanded her to do likewise. The use of word Faqooli (فقولی) implies that she was commanded to communicate in speech. Moreover, Quran explicitly declares that Siam **(صیام)** were mandatory for previous nations as well. Then, why concoct strange stories or weird interpretations? Last, God never changes His laws. Hence, there should be no difference between the Siam **(صیام)** of previous nations and that or ours.

God Almighty says:

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يُنِيبُ

He has prescribed for you the same Sharia (شریعہ) of Deen (دین) that Noah (نوح) received. And the decrees you have received are the same He sent down to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, i.e. uphold the Deen (دین) and do not create divisions. But your call for unity is hard on the idolaters. Allah directs to Himself whom he wills and guides o Himself who seeks guidance.

(Traditional translation of Surah 42 Verse 13)

Now please observe the behavior of our beloved traditional scholars. Do not they demonstrate utter ignorance of the teachings of the Quran by promoting sectarianism and creating divisions among Muslims? They have invented their own countless sharias **(شریعہ)** to compete with One Sharia **(شریعہ)** of Deen **(دین)** in blatant

violation of God’s Decrees. And each Alim **(عالم)** proudly follows and promotes the Sharia **(شریعہ)** of his own sect.

If Maryam (Mary) was following the same Sharia **(شریعہ)** received by our Prophet, then her fasting was exactly the same as ours. If her fasting allowed her to eat and drink, then our fasting should allow us to eat and drink as well. There should be no difference whatsoever.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ۝ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ۭ فَمَنْ كَانَ
مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ ۭ وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ
يُطِيْقُوْنَهٗ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِيْنٍ ۭ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ ۭ
وَاَنْ تَصُوْمُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you, as it was prescribed to those before you, so that you become Mutaqi. These are just a number of days. If any of you is sick or on a journey, he can make up the number on other days. For those who have the power to fast (but choose not to do so) there is a ransom, the feeding of a needy. But whoever does well of his own will, it is better for him. And fasting is better for you if you knew. (Traditional Translation)

Five out of six times Quran uses it as a punishment. But the beginning of the above verses is stunning. Here Quran states that the reason of Fasting has been prescribed because it will make you Mutaqi. Is not it strange that the same act used as a punishment five times is now being prescribed as a gift or blessing? How it is possible that the same physical trial used as a punishment in one place suddenly becomes a blessing, which helps people become Mutaqi, in another place? If we consider it a punishment here as well, how come God subjected the whole Muslim Nations to this punishment from the day one? Does Ummah deserve this kind of punishment or Siam is something other than keeping oneself hungry and thirsty?